

DOWN THE SHADOW MINE

Persistent Faithfulness of an Oriental Stoic

By MAY
ROBERTS
CLARK

THEY camped that time on a narrow plateau, high up between two desolate mountains. The calendar declared it to be July, but the night was raw and penetrating. Between the swaying scrubby boughs above their heads they could see the bright stars glittering through the frosty atmosphere. A vast silence and emptiness made itself felt even to the miners, who huddled about the fire.

At last the loneliness proved too much for Beardsley, and he said to start conversation: "So you're not going with us to-morrow, Fairfax?"

"No," admitted the older man reluctantly, "I've had all the snooping into old mines that I want. I never expect to go under ground again until I'm put there for good. The outside of the earth is good enough for me. If you don't think that cooking for this gang entitles me to a share in the find—well, I'll move on, that's all."

"Don't be touchy, Fairfax," remonstrated Harrington. "We're satisfied if you are; but we can't help being curious. You wouldn't go down the Toqua because it was perpendicular. Now Morgan's shaft is almost level, and still you won't go. We have been wondering if you are superstitious about deserted mines."

"I don't know whether it is superstition or not," answered Fairfax doubtfully; "but I guess if you ever had been tortured by Indians you would keep clear of them forever after. It's that way with me about mines."

"Oh," said Beardsley, "we didn't know that you had a reason for your prejudice."

"Well, I have," insisted Fairfax. "Once I was down the Shadow—" There he stopped and looked off over the sullen, forbidding landscape. "I tell you, boys," he went on, "it's good to be up here and see the tops of things!"

"But what about the Shadow?" coaxed Beardsley, as he gorged the fire so that it would last for a long time without attention.

"Well," answered Fairfax slowly, as he watched the smoke and the sparks, "it was a queer old unlucky mine. I never heard its early history. When I first knew it everybody who was in the least degree superstitious avoided it, as if it was the plague. Wiser people said it wasn't worth a cent. But the old tradition of its hidden wealth still drew prospectors, till a long series of cave-ins and other accidents left it deserted to its evil fate."

"Long before we went there it had been given up for good by most miners, because the river had broken through a shaft and flooded the lower level. There's something unearthly about going down over the water. I don't know why it should make any difference whether there is rock or river at the bottom, but it does."

Fairfax stopped and shivered. He looked away from the men, off over the tops of things, as if to reassure himself. "I never knew but one man who wasn't queered a little on his first trip down over the water," he went on in a lower key, "and he was a Chinaman—usually he was scared at everything too. I must tell you something about him. Cooked for our gang. A hideously homely, stupid little chap. The boys used to nag him nearly to death, and scare him too. It was such fun to see his eyes stick out and to watch him flinch."

"I felt sorry for the poor heathen, if he was nothing but a yellow 'Chang'; so I got to standing up for him. He never seemed to notice it, though; but that didn't matter. I kept on looking after him as if he was some relative or other, just because I'd formed the habit. He never gave me a smile or pidgeon-English 'Thank you.' It amused me so much that I tried harder than ever to see if I couldn't wring out an acknowledgment in spite of himself. It didn't work. Once I did his cooking for a week, when I was in camp with a lame leg; let him pocket the wages and go visiting the other cooks in the neighboring camps. And once—"

"See here, Fairfax," protested a voice from the tent door, "I don't see what that Chinaman has got to do with Shadow mine."

"Don't suppose you do," was the retort. "Neither did I at the time. That comes later."

"Shut up, Bain!" growled Harrington. "Nobody accuses you of knowing how to tell a yarn. This camp hain't forgot your bear story."

A general laugh ended in badinage and retort. In the pause that followed Fairfax calmly proceeded: "Our camp usually followed placer digging. Sometimes we got tired of that and went sneaking into old mines, just like this gang. That's how



"I Recognized the Homely Stupid Face of Our Yellow Cook"

we came to strike the Shadow.

"I was a good deal younger then, and of course more venturesome. When part of the gang got ready to go down, I insisted on being the first. The boys decided that I was to stop at the nearest level and let the rope go back for Jimson. I guess they didn't want to take my judgment alone on the first investigation."

"I don't often remember weather; but I'll never forget how that day looked from the shaft. When they began to lower me down, I was struck with a strange uneasiness. Mind you, I don't believe in presentiments. Even now I think it was due to that sneaking river. The walls were black and oozy, and a disagreeable mineral odor filled the mine. Every turn of the windlass seemed to be dividing me from life and lowering me into some unknown horror. I turned my face up to the mouth of the mine. What a beautiful sky! What sunshine—cloudless sunshine! A few bushes that had grown over the edge glowed like jewels above the black shaft. Beyond them a singing bird was passing out of sight."

"I don't know how long I looked up, but pretty soon it seemed as if the picture wavered a little. I winked hard to clear my sight and looked again. Surely the ground above me was moving! I could hear shouting and the faint sound of running feet. Then in a moment of sickening horror I realized my danger and desertion."

"There I was suspended between two fearful fates. Far below in the darkness lay a sullen river, and just above hung a vast, quivering mountain of rock, ready to fall at any moment. I was paralyzed with terror, and shutting my eyes waited in agony. The last thing I remember was the maddening jar and thunder of ripping, roaring, grinding rock." Fairfax paused.

"I never knew just how it happened," he went on at last; "but one great boulder proved to be my salvation. Probably it was the first to fall. It must have hit the rope and swung me onto a narrow ledge that had been left from some small

cave-in. Only a few feet above my head that same great rock stuck fast in a niche of the shaft, or I should have been ground to powder. I suppose it protected me from tons of other boulders. At one place where it made a high arch into the shaft it didn't stick out beyond the ledge, and the opening was a window from which I could look both ways into the mine. From where I lay I could see across and up the shaft to a tiny bit of sky. That was the first thing I noticed when I became conscious. I lay there watching it, perhaps for a few minutes, perhaps for hours."

"I was stunned and bleeding and exhausted. I couldn't remember what had happened. After awhile I crawled to the opening and looked out. The shaft was so changed that I didn't recognize it. Not far above the cave-in had left such a wide gap in the mouth of the mine that the sunshine went deep into the black hole. And after all that uproar there was not a sound, not one single sound. I looked up again and saw a bird crossing the sky. It recalled the picture I had seen while being lowered into the mine. The whole thing came back to me with such force that the sunshine turned to blackness."

"When I came to myself it was dark. My head was throbbing wildly and I was parched with the thirst of the wounded. I looked into the shaft and wondered feebly why the boys did not come to help me. At last it occurred to me that they wouldn't come. Who would ever dream of looking for a man under that awful landslide? My only hope was to save myself. The thought gave me strength. I went to the edge of the rock and looked up. It was impossible. A fly couldn't

have climbed that long concave surface. It seemed as if I had escaped instant death only to die of slow tortures by thirst and hunger."

"I guess I went out of my head after that, and I got the idea that our cook kept calling to breakfast, or something. I tried to wake up enough to shout back, but after awhile gave up the effort as useless."

"The next thing I remember I was watching the stars, which were shining over the mouth of the mine. In the uncertain light I could see a narrow dark streak running past me into the shaft. After several efforts I was able to reach it with my hand. The familiar touch of a rope aroused some interest. I peered into the mine below and saw a dim figure swaying beneath a yellow flame. The pain in my head was so bad that I couldn't reason about it. I only watched it mechanically as it swung upward. When I saw it coming nearer, I realized vaguely that it would soon pass by and leave me there alone. That scared me, and I cried out like a frightened child in the dark."

"The dangling figure heard me and answered. Then I saw a dim head in a halo of candle-light emerge from the darkness and recognized the homely, stupid face of our yellow cook. I haven't a clear idea of what happened after that. I was shouted at and jerked and dragged and twisted and spun round and round in empty air."

It must have been late the next morning when I opened my eyes and looked around. I was lying above ground in the blessed sunshine. They had brought me to the old camping-place, but the tent and all the outfit were gone. Evidently the boys had pulled up stakes and moved on. But some

JUST TWO OLD CRONIES

Continued from page 5

one must have stayed behind with the almost hopeless hope of finding me.

"I twisted my head a little farther and saw some distance away three yellow 'Changs' chatting gravely on a log. Then I remembered the illuminated face that I had seen in the shaft. I understood at last that our old cook must have felt gratified for what I had done, if he hadn't let on.

"I found out afterward that he was all broke up over the accident and insisted on hunting for me. The boys proved to him that it was utterly hopeless; but he wouldn't give up. Admitted everything, they said, but still demanded a search. They argued with him. It didn't make any difference. When they broke camp he stayed behind and went for the help of some of his own people. I tell you, the rope he used in the mine was horribly patched and worn, but it was all he had and he made it do.

"And the way he tended me afterward! You haven't any idea. Nursed me and fed me and bathed my wounds, till I hardly had time to sleep. And he smiled at last the most awful smile, for which I hope he is forgiven.

"Suppose he would have been sticking to me yet; but one day I struck a rich pocket and made him take the proceeds, that is, except what I gave to the other two 'Changs.' He swore he didn't want it and wouldn't leave me; but I got his two yellow friends to make him see reason. Finally he left unwillingly, with nuggets enough to buy a wife and a business."

Fairfax stopped and kicked a branch into the dying fire. "Now," he went on slowly, as he watched the smoke and sparks, "you know why I don't want to go into a shaft again, even if it is dead-sure safe."

"Say, Fairfax," exclaimed Harrington, "I heard that story over the mountains; but I had forgotten the name of the mine and never dreamed it was you."

"And I'll bet I know your 'Chang,'" broke in Beardsley. "Measley little pox-marked chap, with a wart on his chin and a game eye?"

"That's him; that's Wah Lung," asserted Fairfax.

"He asked me if I knew you," Beardsley hurried on; "but I didn't then; and I had forgotten all about it till just now. He's a big man in the quarter; but they think he's a little cracked, because he is forever hunting up miners from over the range, and asking after 'Flank' something. Must be you. He said the man gave him his business start."

"Well," exclaimed Fairfax in pleased surprise, "I didn't suppose he cared so much! It's worth a good deal to be so well remembered, even by a yellow 'Chang.'"

The next morning as the gang was starting for Morgan's mine Fairfax came out of his cooking-tent to wish them luck. "And if you don't mind," he ended apologetically, "I'd like to get off for a week or so. If you strike it while I'm gone, just count me out."

"Wouldn't think of it," said Bain. "But where are you going, old chap?"

Fairfax colored and looked away. "Just down the coast a little," he answered evasively. "And there's baking enough to last till I get back."

"Gee whiz!" gasped Beardsley, "You must have been up all night."

"Was, nearly," admitted Fairfax. "You see, I want—I'm going—well, I might as well say it, Wah Lung's been asking for me and I'm going to see him."

A chorus of voices answered: "All right, old man!"

"Hope you'll enjoy yourself!"

"Be sure to come back!"

"And our gratitude to the yellow 'Chang'!"

At the mouth of Morgan's they turned to wave him a last farewell.

"Queerest thing I ever heard of," mused Harrington—"a man like Fairfax as thick as thieves with a Chinaman. I don't understand it even yet."

"But you would all right enough," insisted Beardsley, "if you had ever been in his place down the shaft of Shadow mine."

down the pike. It rumbled upon the bridge. Miss Rhetta looked up. The young man drivin' looked down. Their eyes met. The young man looked away quickly. The spray of apple-blossoms dropped into the creek, swish! Miss Rhetta clinged to the rail, her face as white as her dress, her hand pressed against her bosom, a sob in her eyes.

Cap'n Obadiah and old Doc Lavender stood in the middle of the road, starin' after the buggy. At a bend in the pike the young man turned and looked back. His lips were close pressed, his face was pale. The dust was trailin' behind him. A tree by the roadside slipped in between. He was out of sight.

Then they looked at Miss Rhetta. She was lookin' at them. Her head was poised proudly; on her cheeks were two spots like she'd pressed some apple-blossoms against them and they'd stuck there. Her bosom heaved with deep breaths. She kept constantly moistenin' her livid lips. Her eyes were on fire, but in them, way down deep, something seemed to tremble—tremble like the voice of a child in the dark. Then the fire spread from her eyes to her face, into every curl of her hair, into every supple muscle: fire in every drop of her blood, fire through and through—a blaze of glory. The very day was changed; there seemed to be a cloud over the sky. The ripples on the

creek died. It was like the moment before a storm.

Cap'n Obadiah and Doc Lavender stood like two old fools and gaped at her. They forgot who they was and where they was and what they was doin'. They almost forgot to breathe. All they knew was that they was lookin' at something beautiful, beautiful; something they never had seen before; something they never would see again.

Presently she held out her hands to them. It was like she said: "Oh, I want you to be my friends!"

They walked along the road together—the two old men and the angel. The woman was silent, like a great love. Deep down in the men something was bubbling, bubbling. It was reverence—pure, white, God-created reverence. And so they came to the town.

They stopped at Mis' Hackett's gate, where Miss Rhetta lived. Miss Rhetta thanked them and smiled and, with the tremblin' still in her eyes, went into the house.

For a second Cap'n Obadiah looked at Doc Lavender, and Doc Lavender looked at Cap'n Obadiah. Then they crept away, tiptoin', like the preacher was sayin' "Dust to Dust." Silently they shuffled up the street, keepin' clost to each other, like little kids afraid of the shadders, to the tavern.

And there on the verandy was settin' the young man, chair tilted back, feet on the railin', cigar in his mouth, eyes lookin' straight ahead but seein' nothin'—nothin' but the sky.

Say, do you know why Eve ate that apple? Because us human critters need comfort, and no one can sympathize with a woman like another woman. They just can't do it.

Now, there was Cap'n Obadiah and Doc Lavender. Why, their honest old hearts melted and slopped over when they saw the tremblin' in Miss Rhetta's eyes; but they couldn't speak it. Lord, no, they couldn't speak a word. It was for Mis' Hackett to go up to Miss Rhetta's room and get down beside her on her knees, where she was kneelin' by her bed, her face buried on her arms and her hair ripplin' over her shoulders like moon-light fallin' on the water. Now a man will foller at a woman's heels like a little puppy dog, his eyes tellin' how sorry he is; but it takes another woman to get right down into her heart, clear down into the very bottom of it—and stay there. I bet you!

And Mis' Hackett—fond mother of one boy and good, old, lovin' step-mother to the whole town—Mis' Hackett, when she came out of that room, the heartache was oozin' out of every pore. But she's calm and determined, Mis' Hackett is. Like a person who ain't afraid to shake hands with her duty and say, "Howd'y, I'm glad to see yeh," she took her bonnet from a nail, slipped out the back door, cut across lots and went straight to Doc Lavender.

Seems like there'd been a misunderstanding betwixt the young folks—just a little, dinky nothin', you might say. Miss Rhetta, prob'ly, was most at fault in the beginnin'; but I do blame the young feller for not givin' her a chance to explain things. That oughter been her privilege. But when young folks air in love, it comes natural to 'em to do fool things—now, don't it?

"If I was a man like you," says Mis' Hackett, endin' her conversation with Doc Lavender, "if I was a great big man like you, that ought to have children of your own, goodness knows," says she, tossin' her head—Doc sighed—"I know what I'd do!"

"And I'll do it," says Doc, a new light shinin' on his bronzed old face, "I'll do it, so help me!"

When she was gone he went to a drawer and took out a woman's lace handkerchief and looked at it silent for a long time. Then he laid it between the leaves of an old Bible, wiped his glasses with his blue bandana and went out to find Cap'n Obadiah.

"Here, Captin'," says he, when him and Obadiah were standin' outside the tavern, "here's where we go gently but firmly into the kid's presence and reads to him a chapter or two out of our treatise on 'What's What.' You, Captin'," says he, "will do the oratin'."

"Ha!" cries Obadiah, visibly affected. "Ha! It would seem to me, Doc Lavender, that you, as a duly elected select-man of Saloom Center, havin' at heart the welfare of the town and the inhabitants thereof—"

"Excuse me, Captin'!" breaks in Doc. "This is a matter for the board of eddication. Ain't the teacher the interested party? And you, as a member of said board—"

"We flips!" yells Obadiah, takin' a quarter from his pocket.

"Heads," says Doc Lavender, his eyes snappin' like a chronic old sport.

Bing! went the coin in the air; plunk! it fell on the sidewalk, with two old men on their knees, grinnin' with excitement. It quadrilled, it waltzed, it jigged, it reeled, then it staggered a second, hesitated, wavered and rolled down a crack.

"Ha!" cries Obadiah, squintin' down the hole, "see what you made me do, you old Chinese junk!"

Doc Lavender poked his long, slender fingers between the planks. He could, almost reach it. "Do you reckon," he drawls, lookin' at Obadiah soberly—do you reckon, Captin', if we pried up a

The Sideboard and the Silver
The sideboard should be stocked with the kind of silver that gives pleasure in its use and in its exhibition.
This grade of silver plate bears the trade mark

"1847 ROGERS BROS."

It is the kind which stays in the family through generations and is appreciated equally for its wearing quality and for its beauty. If there is occasion to purchase silver for a new home or at the time of replenishing, and you would secure "Silver Plate that Wears," insist upon "1847 ROGERS BROS." Sold by leading dealers everywhere. Send for our catalogue "K-54" showing our patterns.

MERIDEN BRITANNIA CO., Meriden, Conn.
(International Silver Co., Successor) CHICAGO

NEW YORK

BRILLIANT BLACK JAP-A-LAC APPLIED TO RANGES

Registers, Furnace, Gas and Water Pipes, Iron Fences, Wire Screens—in fact all iron or metal surfaces, and old buggies or carriages, produce a glossy black finish that is both beautiful and durable. For sale by all paint dealers.

Write today for color card showing 13 colors, and instructive booklet describing the many uses for JAP-A-LAC.

If YOUR dealer does not keep JAP-A-LAC, send us his name and too, to cover cost of mailing, and we will send a FREE Sample (quarter pint can), to any point in the United States.

THE Glidden VARNISH CO.
Address Dept. L. B.
331 Williamson Bldg.
CLEVELAND, OHIO.

EASILY APPLIED QUICKLY DRIED

DO YOUR OWN VARNISHING

POND'S EXTRACT
THE OLD FAMILY DOCTOR

The Fact

that Pond's Extract has been on the market for sixty years, is bottled by the manufacturers and never sold in bulk, leaves no chance for adulteration.

How about witch hazel which is always sold in bulk and passes through several hands before reaching the consumer?

Witch Hazel is not the same thing. On analysis of seventy samples of Witch Hazel—offered as "the same thing"—fifty-two were shown to contain wood alcohol or formaldehyde or both. Avoid danger of poisoning by using

POND'S EXTRACT
THE OLD FAMILY DOCTOR